

~~SECRET~~

24 January 1950

~~MEMORANDUM~~

~~SUBJECT: Non-recognition of State Department Telegrams on the seizure of
US property by the Chinese Communists in Peking~~

1. On the morning of 14 January 1950 the State Department released to the press an official statement of the circumstances surrounding the seizure of United States property by the Chinese Communists in Peking leading to its decision to withdraw all diplomatic and consular officials from China.

2. Although it will be noted from Enclosure (1) that copies of some scattered telegrams to and from Peking were received during this period they provided no basis for assessment by R/P of a critical situation there. In fact, the State Department press release was the first indication that a ~~serious situation~~ was involved.

3. The following abstracts from the press release suggest the seriousness of a considerable number of pertinent telegrams during the development of this crisis situation:

"...the Department...on January 10 requested the good offices of the British Foreign Office...(for delivery of a US statement to General Chen Yi-lai)...[as follows]...(the US) has no objection to the turnover to the Chinese Communists of the Glasis Property... (and Communist occupation of the US-owned building there)...Should Chinese Communist military authorities requisition any of the US Consular Compound, however, the United States Government would... conclude that it had no alternative to closing all of its official establishments in Communist China..."

(R/P): no message to this effect has ever been received by R/P)

"...Mr. Clark was authorized as a last resort to bring directly or indirectly to the attention of General Chen...(these)...views and intentions of the US..."

(R/P): no message to this effect has ever been received by R/P)

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"...This Mr. Clubb did in a communication to General Chen on 11 January, which was received..."

(NOTE: no message to this effect has ever been received by CNS)

"...at 3:30 pm on 13 January, for 2:30 am, 13 January, Washington time; ample time for handling in the routine Friday daily traffic. Mr. Clubb received an oral communication...that the suspension order would be put into effect from 1:00 on the following day..."

(NOTE: no message to this effect has ever been received by CNS)

"...Mr. Clubb later in the same day confirmed the message by formal letter..."

(NOTE: no message to this effect has ever been received by CNS)

"...at 9:30 am, 14 January, for 8:30 pm, 13 January, Washington time; ample time for handling in the standby Saturday daily traffic...involved...the compound..."

(NOTE: no message to this effect has ever been received by CNS)

4. The State Department's act of withholding information acts directly across the Central Intelligence Agency's responsibility "to correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to the national security, and provide for appropriate dissemination of such intelligence within the Government..." (Sec. 102 (d) (1), National Security Act of 1947, as amended). Whether the Department of State's act of withholding this traffic was intentional (because of concern for the sensitivity of the developments) or was inadvertent, the result is the same: the Central Intelligence Agency was deprived of information essential to discharge of its mission. Moreover, action of any "operating" department of the government to withhold information for "operational" reasons in potentially explosive situations in the future, will deny the Central Intelligence Agency the very reports essential to provide warning against an imminent outbreak of hostilities, or other situations having a critical bearing on United States national security interests.

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